

**Marie Torre Reports****True Western Courage: Payne Quits Own Show****Marie Torre**

The boldest display of courage by a Western hero may have escaped the attention of viewers, for it wasn't something that could be SEEN on television. It was strictly a behind-the-scenes matter involving actor **John Payne**, who did the unnatural thing and quit "**Restless Gun**" at the peak of its popularity. That's courage, Virginia, though others might call it foolhardiness.

Foolhardy or courageous, Payne shows he has the backbone of an all-American hero when he chooses to be unemployed rather than engaged in gainful work requiring artistic compromise.

Said compromise grew out of the ownership structure of "**Restless Gun**." Two large television companies were his "partners" in the venture, and though Payne's deal called for artistic autonomy, representatives of the partners offered steady interference. So much so that the actor soon felt as if he were playing in a four-man poker game with twenty kibitzers.

**Is He Sour? No!**

"When ABC offered to buy the reruns, the full two seasons of them," said Payne, "I saw an excellent opportunity

**John Payne**

to get out of a messy situation, even though it meant loss of income. Am I sour? Not at all! I got a liberal education in the business of TV. It's so damn big that it's unwieldy. The red tape is like it is in the Army.

"Anyway, I spent the summer collecting my thoughts and planning for the future."

Oddly enough, Payne sees his future in TV. He is in New York this week to meet with TV buyers who might be interested in what came out of his summer of meditation—another weekly show.

He calls it "**The Weapon Masters**," and it has to do with intelligence work under civilian status.

"It's information gathering, really," explained Payne. "To give you a simplified example, let's say a toy manufacturer wants to open a plant in Japan. Before the manufacturer can start making his plans it's important for him to know the area—the neighbors, the local politics. That's where I'd come in. As head of a private organization, I'd go to the area and make a full check.

"It's really a fascinating and timely subject, the sort of thing you can write from the headlines. You take Vice-President Nixon's experience in South America. Why did he end up with egg on his face when he was there? Who goofed? An incident like that could easily be dramatized for one of the shows in my series."

What if he doesn't catch a buyer?

"I'll go home to California and think some more," Payne shrugged with imperturbability. "This is my thinking year."

Not only courageous, this Payne, but solid, too!